

Wall's Guiliano rolls behind strong O-line

Experienced group paves way for Guiliano

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LACEY — Using what it felt was a poor performance in its final scrimmage as motivation, the Wall offensive line paved the way for a season-opening victory on the road against a quality opponent.

The line, which welcomed back all five starters from last season, as well as the tight end, allowed Jim Guiliano to rush for 125 yards and two touchdowns, and the Crimson Knights, No. 3 in the Asbury Park Press Top 10, beat No. 8 Lacey, 21-14, in a Shore Conference non-divisional game Saturday.

Going against a Lacey defensive line that includes Lex Knapp, a first-team All-Shore selection a season ago, and Tyrell Smith, a 295-pound Division I-A recruit, the Crimson Knights averaged 5.0 yards per rushing attempt.

“Against Rumson (in a Sept. 1 scrimmage), we felt like we were embarrassed so we had something to prove, and I think we proved it,” senior lineman Matt Ford said. “We did a really good job moving the ball. We didn’t think we’d be able to run power, and we ran power great so I think we did a great job.”

Steve Cluley was 2-for-4 passing on third downs for 54 yards, including the winning touchdown. On third-and-6 from the Lacey 33-yard line, Cluley found Conor Mulholland down the middle of the field to put the Crimson Knights (1-0) ahead, 21-14, with 3:10 remaining in the game.

On its ensuing possession, Lacey drove to the Wall 36 with 1:14 left, and Kyle Spatz, who gained 160 yards on 22 carries, picked up six yards on fourth-and-2 to move the chains. The Lions (0-1), though, then fell victim to some questionable clock management.

Quarterback Brandon Boos spiked the ball on first down, and after Spatz was held to a 1-yard gain on second down, Boos spiked it again with 45.9 seconds to go. That left Lacey with a fourth-and-9 at the Wall 29, and Tom Kelly, who also saw time behind center for the Lions, threw an incomplete pass.

“They’re pretty good up front, and they’re going to give some people some fits,” Wall coach Chris Barnes said of the Lacey offensive line, which helped the Lions gain 257 yards on the ground. “We’re going to have to clean it up, but in the end, the kids fought. They battled, and they found a way to win it.”

Guiliano scored on runs of 11 and four yards, and Wall took a 14-7 lead into halftime. Lacey tied the score with 1:35 left in the third quarter when Spatz broke multiple tackles on his way to a 33-yard touchdown run.

The Lions, who were coming off a 12-0 season, were without tight end/linebacker Jordan Powell, who is recovering from a MRSA infection. Powell said he expects to play next week against Brick.

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